

**Architectural Impact Assessment on historic structures related
to Sutherlands Tannery, Lot 195 Plessis Laer, Edendale**



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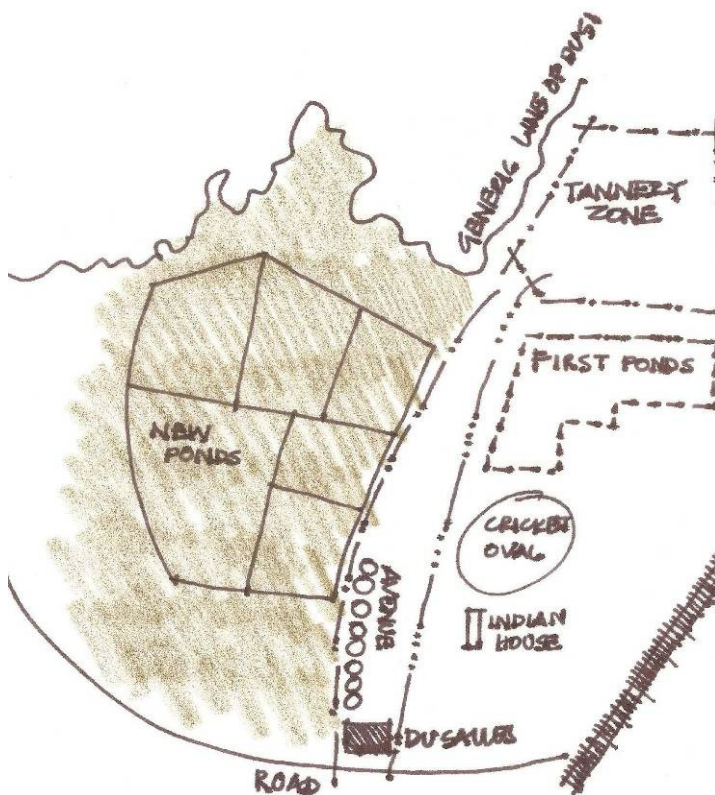
1 Introduction

Debbie Whelan of Archaic Consulting was approached by Mr Theo Wicks of Terra Test with respect to conducting an historic and architectural impact assessment on Lot 195, Plessis Laer, with respect to the elimination and rehabilitation of the extant settlement ponds, in the light of a future development on the site. Although the site is much disturbed, and virtually all of its extent extensively used in the last fifty years, it's proximity to the river and precedent in the area with regard to Iron Age findings has led to a brief archaeological opinion being included in this report and forming the basis of discussion in section 5. It must be noted that the archaeology is not the core function of this report.

Lot 195 Plessis Laer is located to the west of the Tannery buildings, and forms the river plane to the south of Dick Whittington Shoes, on the Old Edendale Road. It shares a boundary with Dusalles Hotel, which is not affected by the intended development and the Msunduzi River is situated to the north. Please note that this document should be read in conjunction with the environmental and hazardous waste comments as set out in the *'Background Information Document For The Proposed Edendale Business And Industrial Park Basic Environmental Assessment, Edendale, Pietermaritzburg'* November 2009 compiled by Terratest.

2 Methodology and statement of expertise

Debbie Whelan of Archaic Consulting is a trained researcher in the historic architectural and anthropological fields, and specializes in Impact Assessments and land reports.



The site as described above was visited on 5 January 2010, and its extent examined. It currently consists of a number of open ponds which formed the basis of settlement pans during the height of the tanning industry, most of which have been rehabilitated and their chemical levels neutralized. These were photographed. Information from the Provincial Archives Repository and the Deeds Office and Surveyor General in Pietermaritzburg supplemented the on site information. It must be strongly stated that this is not an historical exercise, but one which investigates the history in order to correctly assess the architectural information with regards to conforming to the Provincial Heritage Act No 4 of 2008. The author is, however, strongly of the opinion that this site is of sufficient interest to merit further in depth study.

Fig 1: schematic diagram showing layout with affected site in khaki colour

3 Brief history of site

Being in close proximity to the city, Plessis Lager 1504 was an early settlement, surveyed in 1847. The portion of land described of the 'Plessislager Lots', according to the Land Register, was grant of 195 acres in 1848 to Richard Lund, known as Lot 26. This main portion is reflected on the survey diagram forming Fig 2 below as Lot 19, huddled in the distinctive curve of the Msunduzi River. This lot 19, of 45 acres was excised in 1849. Johann Hoch purchased Subdivision 6 of 1 consisting of 6 acres in 1899, amongst other small lots. However, it should be noted that the railway siding in this proximity was named Sutherlands, and it is after this that the Tannery was named, and not the name of a Tannery operator.

Due to the massive fragmentation of lots from the parent lot 26, it is difficult to establish when the kernel of the tanning industry began. Archival sources note that T Hoch had begun construction of the tannery in 1907, inviting the Prime Minister to visit them, noting at the time that the pits were under construction, and that the main building was completed. He is noted in the 1909 almanac as being Hoch, T. Sutherlands, tanner. (PM 63 1907/152) Hoch had indentured Indians working in his operation, (II 1/190 I1748/1914) and indeed, Plessis Lager was a community of Indian, European and African owned land at the time. Hoch sold many of his small lots to the appropriately named Herbert Hyde in 1918, who was operating a multi-faceted operation. Under the name Standard Industries, a Major Hosken applied for a licence to operate in 1918. Mr Hyde was involved in this enterprise, as it is noted in correspondence to the Chief Magistrate that he showed the Health Inspector around the site, which was leased from Mr Peach who was carrying on riem-making on the adjoining site, and which had a 'dwelling house and tanks'. The original license application named the business of Standard Industries as being 'Fertilizer Makers, Bone Boilers, Fellmongers, Tanners and Fat Extractors', which was amended to 'Wool Washers, Fertilizers and Skin Curers' on 20 August 1918. The cause for complaint was smell and effluent entering the Msunduzi River. (1/PMB 3/1/1/2/1 35/14) The archival references begin in 1914, so the continuation of the nuisance was long standing. Also involved was the subsequent transfer into the name of the Farmers Co-operative Meat Industries Ltd who then consolidated the small subdivisions owned by Hoch and Hyde in 1921 and registered them in the name of Sparks Young and Farmers Meat Industries Ltd. Electricity reached Sutherlands Tannery, as such colloquially named in 1930, as they were able to guarantee a minimum consumption.

In 1937 the Remainder of 12 acres was registered in the name of Sutherland Tannery Ltd¹. Forming the official starting date of Sutherlands Tannery, this corresponds with the status quo as presented in Fig 3 below, showing the ponds to the south of the tannery buildings, perhaps even those constructed by Hoch. The piece of land that is of concern lies to the west, empty at this point, but showing the avenue leading to the tannery, Dusalle's hotel, and the cricket oval below the ponds, which, according to the informants on site, was an early institution indeed. These sites of historic interest are not to be affected by the development.

Note also that the density of the planting to the south west of the site densifies over time according to the aerial photographs and that it is suspected that Sutherlands Tannery were growing wattle to supplement the tanning needs until the end of the 1960's.

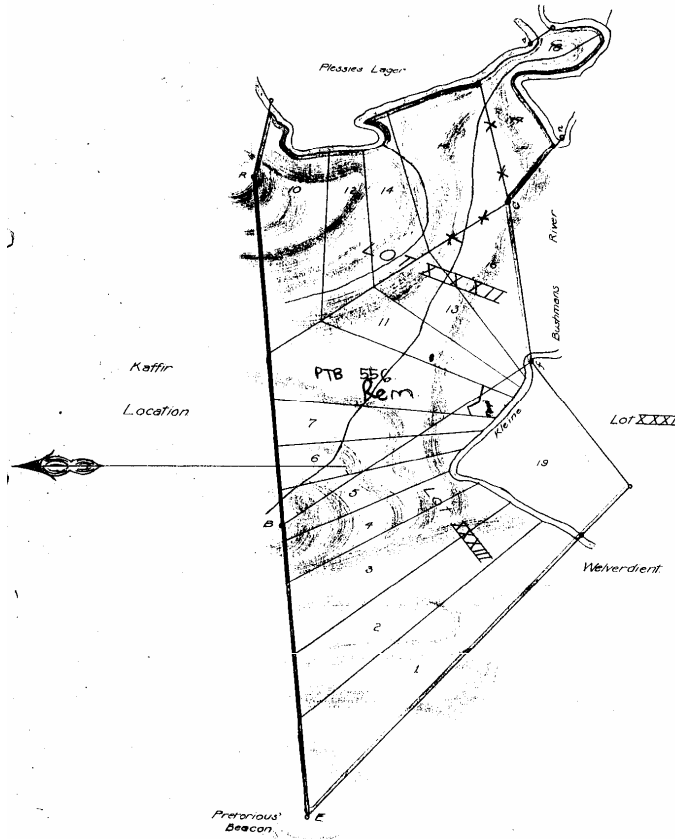
¹ This is Sub 56 of lot 26 (used to be Sub 'The Tannery' of Lot 26)

P.XI-21

GV 35F28

REMAINDER **CANCELLED**

11-Remainder
born G:
S.G. No. 2943 / 15 78 1944
1940
Don. 2-2-50



Surveyed in July 1847
By G. Piers

Area 524 Acres 2 Roads
Scale 300 yds to 1 inch

Plessis Lager.
LOTS 32 & 33, N°1509
County of Pietermaritzburg



THE FOLLOWING DEDUCTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE FROM THIS DIAGRAM

SUBDIVISION	DIAGRAM NO.	S.R.	EXTENT	REMAINDER	TRANSFER NO.
2	SV F 12	-	40 Acres	10/1849	10/1849
3	" 13	-	40 "	14/1849	14/1849
5	GV 128/14	-	20 "	17/1849	17/1849
19	SV F 14	-	4.5 "	29/1849	29/1849
6	" 16	-	20 "	31/1849	31/1849
7	" 17	-	20 "	32/1849	32/1849
4	GV 128/18	-	20 "	40/1849	40/1849
1	SV F 13	-	0.5 "	41/1849	41/1849
10	" 18	-	40 "	42/1849	42/1849
11	" 19	-	20 "	43/1849	43/1849
13	" 11	-	20 "	44/1849	44/1849
12	GV 109/7	-	20 "	45/1849	45/1849
14	SV F 112	-	20 "	46/1849	46/1849
15, 16, 17, 18	" 113	-	84 "	47/1849	47/1849
				40 Acres 2 Roads	53/1849

COPIED FROM ORIGINAL
AND CERTIFIED CORRECT
for SURVEYOR-GENERAL
1847-1-4-1847

FTSG - 235, 1-236
GV 35/13
DS 53
File 762

Fig 2: Survey diagram of erven reflecting site as Lot 19



Fig 3: 1937 aerial survey showing ponds to the south of the tannery buildings



Fig 4:1944 aerial survey showing new ponds and retaining structures



Fig 5: 1959 aerial survey showing ponds relatively unchanged



Fig 6: 1967 aerial survey showing ponds unchanged: note dense afforestation

4 Assessment of structures on site

The structures on the site are largely excavations as opposed to physically constructed buildings. This in itself is of importance, given the age of the excavations as being over 60 years old, and as part of an industrial process which is part of the history of the Plessislaer area. Other structures are three small brick pump houses, one which is roofed and two which are not. In addition, in the proximity of the *Eucalyptus sp.* trees to the north of the site, there are large pieces of rubble which are mainly of concrete construction.

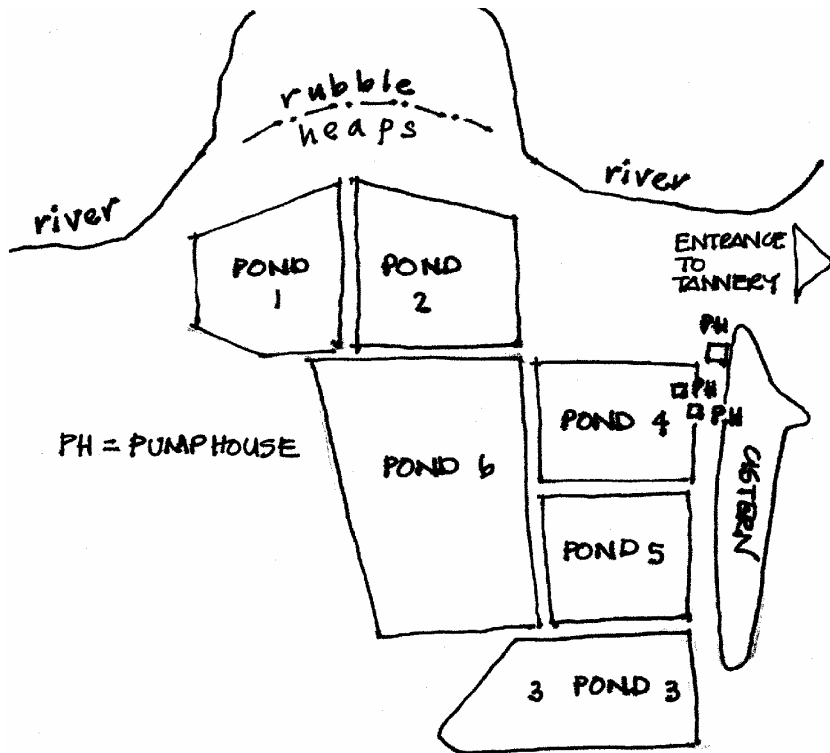


Fig 7: Sketch of existing features on site

4.1 The pumphouses



Fig 8: Pond 3 to the left and pond 2 to the right showing the pumphouses

The three structures are constructed out of brick in stretcher bond and one only has a corrugated sheeting roof and a door- the other two are shells. These were constructed as part of the pond draining process.



Fig 9: showing the two roofless pumphouses of recent construction



Fig 10: Showing pumphouse of recent construction, and currently in use

Significance of structure

pumphouses	local	regional	National	international
Architectural significance	low	low	low	low
Technical significance	low	low	low	low
Scientific significance	low	low	low	low
Social significance	low	low	low	low
Historical significance	low	low	low	low

Recommendations:

These commonly found and recently built structures are a functional adjunct to the business of tanning, and have no merit from an architectural, historical or technological point of view. Demolition, should it be required, is an option, as there is no point in adaptive reuse or incorporation into the new development for the sake of retaining heritage.

4.2 The rubble heaps

It is suspected that these may have been imported and part of retaining systems for the ponds given the distinct visual edge that these present in the 1944 aerial photos. The rubble consists of reinforced cement slabs as well as portions of brick walling which are in English Bond. It is not evident that they formed part of this site. In addition, the current owner says that they have been there for many years, and that there were similar rubble piles on the southern section of the site which have been bulldozed many years ago.



Fig 11: Msunduzi bank at edge of pond 3- the rubble heaps are situated near the Eucalyptus in the background



Fig 12: Rubble on edge of bank beyond Pond 1



Fig13: Rubble on edge of bank beyond Pond 1



Fig 14: Rubble at edge of bank beyond pond 2

Rubble heaps	local	regional	National	international
Architectural significance	low	low	low	low
Technical significance	low	low	low	low
Scientific significance	low	low	low	low
Social significance	low	low	low	low
Historical significance	low	low	low	low

Recommendations:

The rubble heaps are a-contextual and un-diagnostic in this instance, and have low significance in all aspects of the heritage study.

4.3 The Ponds

The ponds in the past, as evident from the aerial photographs, were a vital part of the process of tanning, in neutralizing chemicals and tannins used. However, this function is now largely defunct, and these ponds today are undergoing the process of necessary environmental rehabilitation, including eventual infill. Some have already been filled in. Also, this area is currently used for dumping of by-products of the tanning industry, such as skins and hair (fig 19)



Fig 15: Looking out over Pond 6



Fig 16: Dick Whittington Shoes over rehabilitated and filled in Pond 6



Fig 17: road between Pond 2 and Pond 6 facing the Tannery



Fig 18: Pond 2



Fig 19: Animal effluent on the edge of pond 1

The ponds	local	regional	National	international
Architectural significance	low	low	low	low
Technical significance	medium	low	low	low
Scientific significance	low	low	low	low
Social significance	low	low	low	low
Historical significance	medium	low	low	low

Recommendations:

The ponds are over the age of 60 years as they appear on the 1944 aerial photographs. They have medium value locally as part of an industrial process, and it is recommended that, where possible, one or more of the rehabilitated smaller ones can be retained in the new development as a focal wetland, should the environmental reports indicate as such, and be interpreted in its new context as being the remnant of an industrial process that has been extant on the site for over a century.

5 Comments regarding the archaeology

As noted in the introduction, the archaeology has not been addressed in this instance, although the author has taken the liberty to contact a contract archaeologist in this regard. The archaeologist was sent photographs of the site, and the aerial photographs by email, and the following comment emanates from this. It must also be noted that the Msunduzi River has had altered courses through the years as evident in the aerial photographs, and cognizance should be taken of this.

Umlando: Archaeological Tourism & Resource Management PO Box 102532,
Meerensee, KwaZulu-Natal, 3901 Cell: 0836585362 / 0723481327 Phone/fax 035-7531785; fax:
0865445631 email: umlando@mtnlaoded.co.za
January 7, 2010

Dear Debbie

Thank you for emailing me the information on the proposed Edendale development.

I know this area reasonably well as I did the excavations at Slangspruit several years ago. I also remember that Oliver Davies had recorded several sites in this area a few decades ago, although these sites are not on my database. The location of the study area next to the river, and its general location strongly suggest the occurrence of Early Iron Age sites. These sites will however be well below the surface given the periodic flooding that occurs in the area.

I would suggest that an archaeological survey is undertaken in those areas that were not affected by the ponds, as these are likely to yield material. I also suggest that the Natal Museum's data base maps are consulted to confirm if Oliver Davies had indeed recorded sites in the area.

Please contact me if you require further information.

Yours Sincerely

Gavin Anderson

Winter Night Investments cc (2003/099644/23) trading as Umlando: Archaeological
Tourism & Resource Management VAT Reg No.: 4090215221

6 Conclusions

The industrial nature of this site means that structures built are functional and simple in nature and rarely have any architectural, technical, scientific or historical interest. With regard to the three pumphouses on the site, their recent construction renders them of no interest and demolition is an option. The rubble heaps similarly have little value, and it is suggested that the ponds are interpreted, if possible, in retaining one as a wetland in the new development. This cements part of its industrial past into the future development as well as providing a pleasant environment for the inhabitants of the Business Park. The site has been disturbed to the extent that any archaeology is possibly long gone, but at the same time a brief survey of the areas between Ponds 1 and 2 and the Msunduzi River is a recommendation.



Note: this figure has been derived from the November 2009 BID supplied to the author by Terratest and is used solely in validating the extent of the site, less the avenue to the east as informed by the owner of the property. Note that pond 3 and a large part of pond 1 have been backfilled, and that rehabilitation work is continuing on the remaining ponds.

7 References

Terratest: November 2009 *Background Information Document For The Proposed Edendale Business And Industrial Park Basic Environmental Assessment, Edendale, Pietermaritzburg*

Archival Sources:

3/PMB 4/3/36 401/1929 Supply of current to Sutherlands Tannery.
 PM 63 1907/152 T Hoch Sutherlands, Pmburg. Invitation to Prime Minister to visit New Tannery Buildings
 3/PMB 4/3/190 54/1936 Suggestions from Mr. E Holden, Sutherlands Tannery, Re sale of Corporation Lots.
 3/PMB 4/3/307 748/1938 Senior Assistant Health Officer. Re Sutherlands Tannery. Alleged pollution of Umsinduzi River.
 AGO I/8/152 20A/1916 Chief Magistrate, Durban: G Bull re- trading with G Hoch of the Tannery, Sutherlands.
 3/DBN 4/1/2/1205 439 Proposed erection of Tannery Electro Leather Industries.
 II 1/190 I1748/1914 G Hoch, The Tannery, Sutherlands, Pietermaritzburg: Re free passage for Kullatian no. 1392 and Chinnammal no. 139566.
 3/PMB 4/4/2/268 TC102/9/40 Additional electricity supply to Sutherlands Tannery.
 PMG 109 TD219/1890 Sutherlands Siding - Telegraph connections at.
 PMG 126 TD190/1895 Temporary staff station, Sutherlands Siding.
 3/PMB 4/3/77 153/1932 Provincial Secretary. Re enquiry into health conditions prevailing at Sutherlands.
 3/PMB 4/3/77 1277/1930 Provincial Secretary. Unsanitary condition of Sutherlands area.
 1/PMB 3/1/1/2/1 35/14 Pietermaritzburg Magistrate. Re nuisance and pollution caused by Standard Industries Sutherlands (manure manufacturing and wool washing).